

**IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS OF WORKPLACE
LONELINESS: A TWO SAMPLE MIXED
METHOD STUDY**



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ABSTRACT

Loneliness is a universal phenomenon that is fundamental to the human being. Whether expressed or not, loneliness is experienced by people in their daily lives (Cappacio & Patrick, 2009). It is argued to be a complex and a painful experience. Not only in personal life, but also in the professional life loneliness plays a significant role. In the context of organizations, loneliness is agreed to be a prominent workplace emotion that has the potential to affect both the employees and the organizations. Unfortunately, it has received scant attention within the field of organizational behavior (Ozcelik & Barsade, 2011). The present study attempts to explore whether people feel lonely at their workplace. Subsequently, the study proposes to explore the factors that affect the experience of loneliness at the workplace. Finally, the study aims to explain what organizations can do to mitigate the negative consequences of workplace loneliness. The study is divided into two parts. In the first part, using a qualitative approach, the factors affecting workplace loneliness and its negative consequences were explored. Based on the findings of the qualitative study, a conceptual model has been proposed. In the second part, the proposed model was tested using the quantitative approach. A multi-sample quantitative study was conducted to test the proposed model. Two samples increase confidence in the results and provide strength to the study. Data was collected from participants belonging to the service industry. This phenomenon was studied among employees in the service industry for two reasons. One, the services sector has shown a phenomenal growth not only in developed economies but also in emerging economies such as India. For example, the share of the service sector in the Indian GDP accounted for about 57 percent in 2013 as compared to 15 percent in 1950. With the increasing importance of customer service in sustaining competitive advantage, one of the major challenges before the organizations is how to manage the service employees (Kumar, Das & Topaloglu, 2014). Second, employees surrounded with negative emotions tend to have decreased job performance, low job satisfaction, higher stress and exhaustion

(Kammeyer-Mueller, et al., 2013). The sample represents two professions, namely the nursing and the BPO sector. Structural equation modeling was used to test a theoretical model on the samples comprised of 340 nurses and 907 BPO employees in India. The present study is one of the early attempts to investigate the possible factors and consequences of workplace loneliness. Almost consistent results were found across samples. Implications for theory and managers were also discussed.

Keywords: Loneliness, workplace, emotion, social need

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